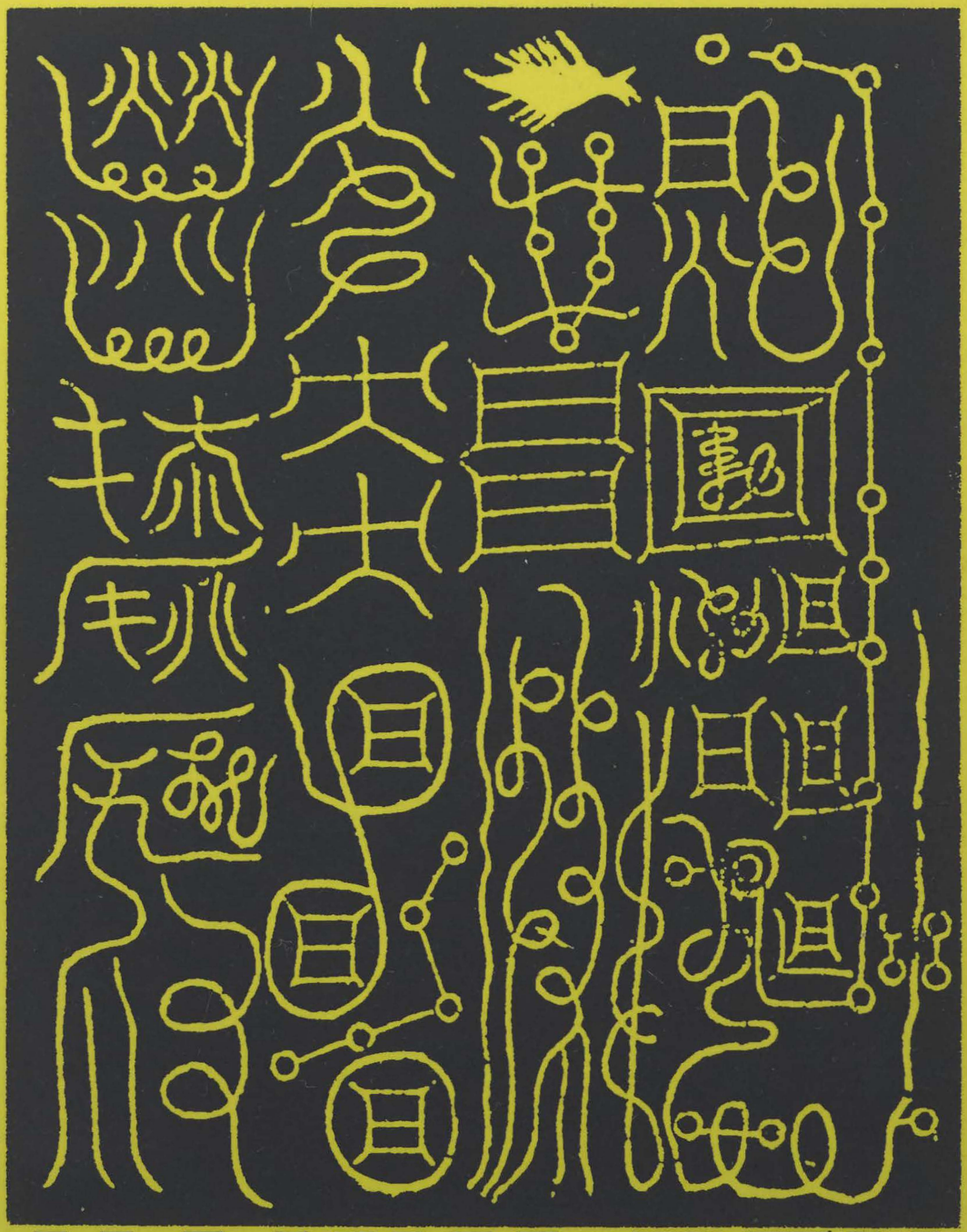
AIMLESS WANDERING

CHUANG TZU'S CHAOS LINGUISTICS



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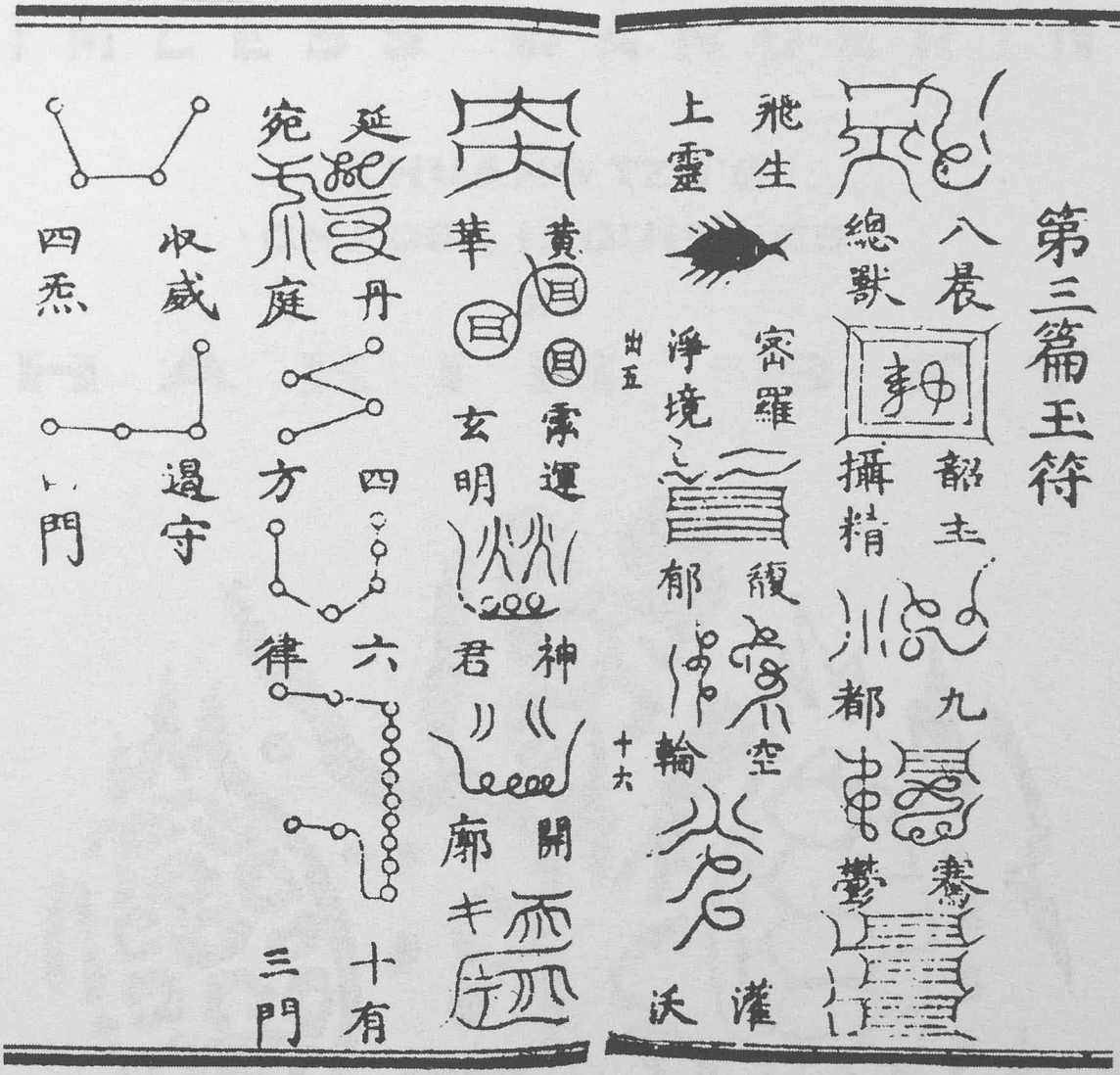


The Jade Talisman

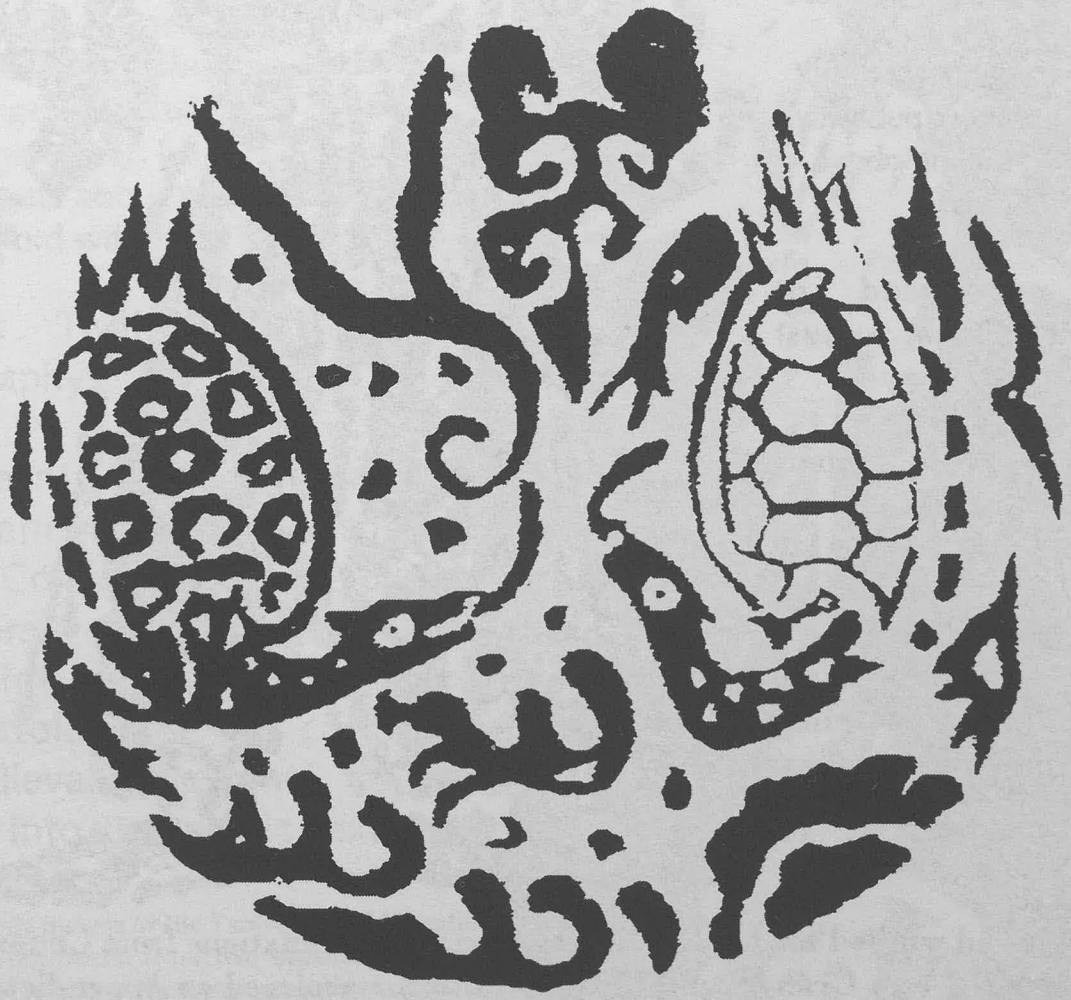
Addressed to the Yellow Spirit of Earth and Center. According to the Taoist Canon, the Talisman consists of twenty components. Reading vertically and from the left, these are: 1. the Eight Daybreaks which control the Wild Beasts; 2. the music of Emporer Shun which pacifies the subtle spirits; 3. the Nine Districts; 4. defects and melancholy; 5. Flying Creatures above the Spirits; 6. Close-netting and the Pure Region; 7. Fragrant and Beautiful; 8. the Empty Turn; 9. to pour a libation of Water; 10. the Yellow Flower[s]; 11. Period of Dark and Light; 12. the Master of the Spirits; 13. to open the Temple; 14. to prolong and yield; 15. the Cinnabar Hall; 16. the Four Directions; 17. the Six Rules; 18. the Thirteen Doors; 19. the receiving of the Majestic Four Vital Spirits *(ch'i)*; and 20. to pass by those who guard the Four Doors. This sequence seems to indicate the stages of an unknown ritual, while the magic ingredients of each diagram reveal multiperceptual contacts with the Yellow Spirit. *(Tao-tsang)*

AIMLESS WANDERING

CHUANG TZU'S
CHAOS LINGUISTICS

BY

HAKIM BEY



Xexoxial Editions
1993

2nd Facsimile Edition 2015
ISBN-10: 1-936687-28-3
ISBN-13: 978-1-936687-28-2

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Entirely produced at Dreamtime Village, August 1993, by Ben Meyers.

Thanks to Marian Firmani, Liz Was & Miekal And, the Public Library at LaFarge, & feedback givers at the Open Center (NYC) & the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics (Naropa Institute, Boulder, CO)

Note Suggested method for reading the text: extensive quotations from Chuang Tzu (translations by A.C. Graham and Burton Watson) are placed as Appendices after the main essay. You might want to read them before reading the essay, and then refer back to them while reading the essay, when they're referred to in the text. Footnotes are placed after the Appendices.

> The bait is the means to get the fish where you want it, catch the fish and you forget the bait. The snare is the means to get the rabbit where you want it, catch the rabbit and you forget the snare. Words are the means to get the idea where you want it, catch on to the idea and you forget about the words. Where shall I find a man who forgets about words, and have a word with him?

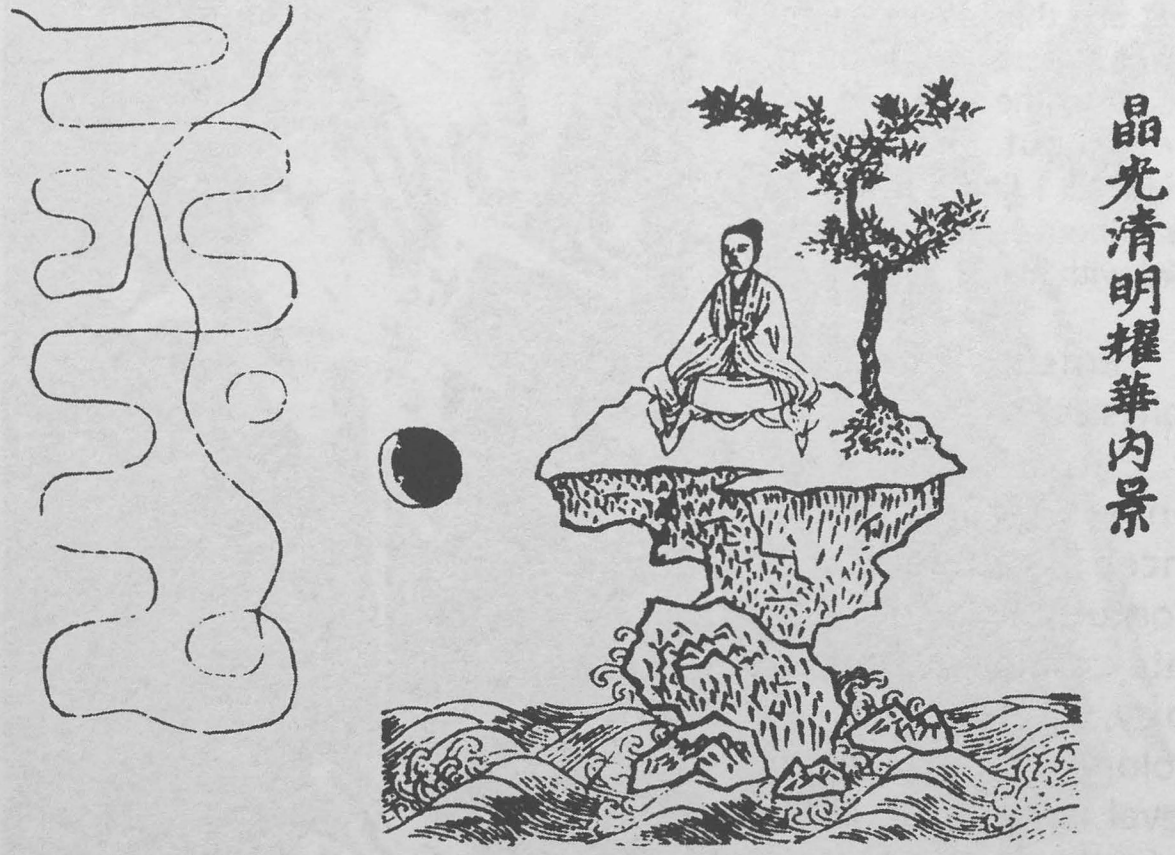
Does Taoism possess a "metaphysics"?

Certainly later Taoism, influenced by Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism, developed elaborate cosmology, ontology, theology, teleology, and eschatology — but can these "medieval accretions" be read back into the classic texts, the

Talismanic picture of the Taoist God of Literature, K'uei-hsing, made from two brushed characters forming his name. He stands on a third character, *ao*, the name of a giant turtle said to support the earth. (Undated stone-rubbing; painted Ma Te-chao)

Tao Te Ching, the *Chuang Tzu*, or the *Lieh Tzu*?

Well, yes and no. Religious Taoism certainly established such a back-reading. But, as J. Needham pointed out[1], the Maoists of our century were able to evolve a marxist reading of Taoism, or at least of the *Tao Te Ching*. No doubt <u>any</u> reading of a "spiritual" text may have some validity (since the spirit is by definition indefinable); the *Tao Te Ching* has proven especially malleable[2]. But Chuang Tzu — it seems to me — not only has no metaphysics, he actually condemns and derides metaphysics.



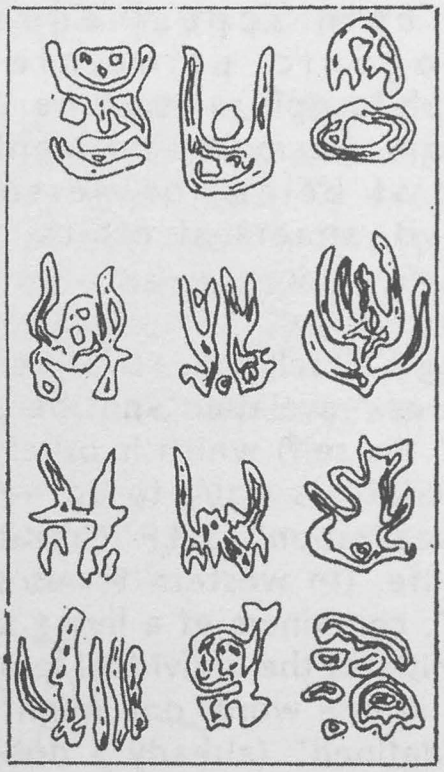
The Beautiful Inner View of Brightness, Clearness and Splendour, depicting a meditating Taoist hermit on the right and a magic diagram on the left. The incantation to accompany the diagram may be translated as follows: 'The view spreads over Heaven [*yang*] and Lake [*yin*], Metal [*West*] and Water [*North*], in a semi-circle. To light the dark night, I and the Dark Pearl [the moon in its last quarter] drink and drift [together]. The bright , thick liquid [of wine, *yin*] and its fragrance penetrate my spiritual body. After repeated true unions [with *yin*], I shall ride over the land and soar to the skies.' *(Tao-tsang)*

Supernaturalism and materialism both appear equally funny to him. His only cosmogonic principle is "chaos". Oddly enough the only philosophical tool he uses is logic — although it is the logic of dream. He makes no mention of divine principle, or the purpose of being, or personal immortality. He is beyond Good and Evil, sneers at ethics, and even makes fun of yoga.

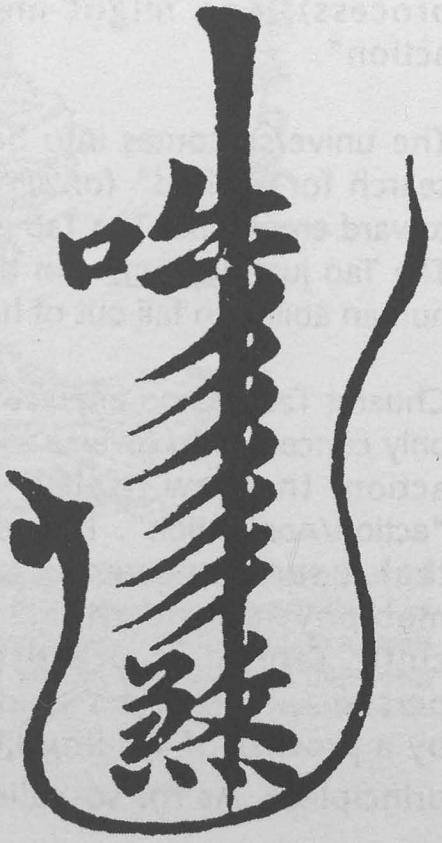
The *Chuang Tzu* must surely be unique amongst all religious scripture[3] for its remarkable ANTI-metaphysics. It qualifies as "revelation" not because it unveils hidden knowledge (from "outside" the self) which is otherwise inaccessible to consciousness — as other scriptures claim to do — but because it transmits a sure way to "spiritual realization", SELF-realization, in this lifetime, in this body, in this daily life. (In western terms such salvific books may rightly be called "angels", containers of a living spirit which communicates and teaches and even initiates the individual reader.) If this way or method could be summed up in one word, one might say spontaneity; and if this term were to be "defined" (already a dubious process), one might mention the phrase *wei wu wei*, "action/non-action".

The universe comes into being spontaneously; as Kuo Hsiang points out[4], the search for a "lord" (or *agens*) of this creation is an exercize in infinite regress toward emptiness. The Tao is not "God", as some Christian translators still believe. The Tao just happens. On the human scale misery arises solely from the uniquely human ability to fall out of harmony with this Tao: — to not be spontaneous.

Chuang Tzu has no interest in why humans are so inept (no concept of "sin"); his only concern is to reverse the process and "return" to the flow. The "return" is an action; the flow itself is not an action but a state — hence the paradox "action/non-action". The concept of *wu wei* plays such a central role in Taoism that it survives even in modern religious Taoism as the truth BEHIND all metaphysics and ritual. In the great expiatory and communal rites of cultic Taoism as practised in Taiwan or Honolulu today, at least one person — the priest — must attain union with the Tao, and must do so by a process of voiding his consciousness of all "deities", all metaphysical principles[5]. As for so-called ancient "philosophical" Taoism, we might say



The "Yu Tablet" - pictographic shapes emerging from natural forms.



Talisman to destroy evil influences and noxious spirits. The character *sheng* - 'life' - is mounted on a horse and penetrates through the character *sha* - 'to strike dead by evil influences'. *(Tao-tsang)*

that it has *wu wei* instead of a metaphysics.

Lao Tzu's goal seems to have been the conversion of the Emperor to Taoism, on the assumption that if the ruler does nothing *(wu wei)* the empire will run itself spontaneously. Chuang Tzu however shows almost no interest in advising rulers (except to leave him alone!), and his examples of "real humans" are almost always workmen (butchers, cobblers, cooks) or drop-out hermits, or bandits. If Chuang Tzu can be said to advocate a social program — and I'm not sure he does — it certainly has nothing to do with any imperial/bureaucratic/confucian values or structures. His "program" could be summed up in the phrase AIMLESS WANDERING.

Chuang Tzu is more anarchistic than Lao Tzu — but is he an "anarchist"? I think yes — not because he wants to overthrow the government, but because he believes government impossible; not because he would ever sink so low as to espouse an "ism", but because he sees chaos as the essence of all becoming.

* * * * *

To illustrate this chaos-ontology we could do worse than investigate Chuang Tzu's take on language.

But first let me define a few terms. I call hermetalinguistics the concept that God revealed language and that there exists such a thing as the conveyance of essence through language. This conveyance can be direct (Hebrew and Arabic are languages "spoken" by God) or emanational, as in neoplatonic linguistics. It can be "hermetic" (or occult, as in Kabbala), or even "meta"-linguistic (as in religious glossolalia, the "charism of tongues") — but in either case it saves language from utter relativity and opacity.

Against this traditional theory of language we moderns have developed a nihilistic linguistics in which words convey nothing of essence and in fact do not really communicate anything except language itself. I trace this current from Nietzsche, to Saussure and his nightmarish experience with the Latin anagrams[6], and eventually to dada.

A leading exponent of hermatalinguistics today (oddly enough) is N. Chomsky,

who (despite his anarchism) believes that language is somehow wired in, although he substitutes DNA for the platonic archetypes! Whom might we pick as a leading exponent of nihilistic linguistics? How about William Burroughs? (In his honor we might call it "heavymetalinguistics".) Much as I admire the aesthetics of both schools I can "agree" with neither. I find myself wishing (as a "spiritual anarchist") for some language theory which might "save" language from the charge of mere re-presentationalism and alienation. However, I want a theory without teleological excresences: — no "lord" of language, no categorical imperatives, no determinism, no revelation from "outside" or "above", no genetic coding, no absolute essence. I find it in two places, one "ancient" nicely balanced against one "modern": — Chuang Tzu, and Chaos Theory.

In part our language troubles arise from the absolute quality assigned to the Word in all western hermetalinguistic traditions. Although some western mystics already express distrust of human words, they can never — on pain of heterodoxy — question the integrity or finality of God's Word. All western religious thought is based on a sort of sacred nominalism which goes unquestioned till "heresy" calls it momentarily into debate. "Orthodoxy" crushes the rebellion against the Word in its own ranks — and the war against the Word is an underground guerilla campaign carried out primarily within literature, in criticism, and in linguistics — against "religion".

We might learn something useful for our search by looking at a spiritual tradition which begins with a distrust of words and yet still manages to make language perform in a magical way [See Appendix E]. Taoism supplies us with precisely such a radical tradition. "The Tao which can be spoken is not the Tao", begins Lao Tzu. Why then did he write the book at all? Why not stick to the silence where all language eventually vanishes, right from the start? One might answer that such a project would amount to precisely the sort of refusal to go with the flow which Taoism most despises. Humans talk, so Taoists talk. This answer might suffice — but a much more interesting response is given by Chuang Tzu.

"Saying is not blowing breath, saying says something," Chuang Tzu asserts — but "the only trouble is that what it says is never fixed. Do we really say something? Or have we never said anything?" [See Appendix B]

Finally this question must remain unanswered, since Chuang Tzu's uncompromising

perspectivalism and linguistic relativism make any categorical attempt to distinguish between "It" and "Other" an act of futility. As the translator (A.C. Graham) points out, for Chuang Tzu "all disputation starts from arbitrary acts of naming." Nevertheless, "saying says something" rather than nothing. Language is at once totally "arbitrary" and yet capable of meaning. Otherwise the Taoist would indeed fall silent.

A writer of the School of Chuang Tzu discusses what he calls "ward and sector words"[7], by which he means the sorting and classifying functions of language. (The metaphor refers to the wards and sectors of the grid-arrangement of Chinese cities; and it's worth noting that the very earliest cities, such as Jericho and Çatal Huyuk, were laid out on strict grid-lines.) This aspect of language is not "the Way", and at worst can become a "chopping to bits and disputing over alternatives." But it is also not not-the-Way. Some paradoxical stance between saying and not-saying is called for, because "the man who perceives the Way does not pursue [names] to where they vanish or explore the source from which they arise", for "this is the point where discussion stops." "There IS a name", but also "there is NO name."

In what is neither speech nor silence
May discussion find its ultimate.

Chuang Tzu distinguishes three kinds of speech. An appended commentary by one of the original editors of the book (whom A.C. Graham calls the "Syncretists") asserts that all three kinds are used by Chuang Tzu himself.

First there is "saying from a lodging-place" [see Appendix D]. Inasmuch as language is arbitrary one may occupy any position or use any definitions to expound the Way. The old editor says Chuang Tzu thought this kind of verbal situationism broadened the scope or "widened the range", i.e. that it could be used to open up ordinary mind to the non-ordinary and meta-verbal Tao. In fact, it works "nine times out of ten," says Chuang Tzu. "Weighted saying works seven times out of ten"; — this is the aphorism, the statement made on authority, spoken from a position "ahead of others" — and "to be a man without the resources to be ahead of others is to be without the Way of Man, and a man without the Way of Man is to be called an obsolete man." Both lodging-place and weighted language would appear to belong to the category of ward-and-sector words. Chuang Tzu's third category clearly interests him the most, since he describes it at the greatest

length. He calls it "Spillover" saying, and comments that it "is new every day. Smooth it out on the whetstone of Heaven. Use it to go by and let the stream find its own channels."

Since language is arbitrary, and the sage knows it, he (or she — for many Taoists were women, including Lao Tzu's legendary teacher) knows that "in saying he says nothing." And yet paradoxically by knowing this and in fact by "refusing to say", the sage "says without saying" and "refuses to say without ever failing to say." How can this be?

When Chuang Tzu says that "the myriad things [i.e. the signifieds] are all the seed from which they grow," I assume that "they" refers to words, to signs, and that he does assert some link between the two categories, despite his (paradoxical) counter-assertion that no such connection can be found. The connection cannot be found (expressed in words) because

in unlike shapes they abdicate in turn,
with ends and starts as in a ring —

that is, "things" themselves are ontologically fluid and protean, unfixed. If you mark a wheel and then spin it,

none grasps where to mark the grades,

and all becomes a blur. As for this flux-state of sign and signified,

call it the Potter's Wheel of Heaven

or "the whetstone of Heaven" on which the sage is advised to "smooth out" or polish his speech. Without this understanding, "who could ever keep going for long?" What decent Taoist could ever speak at all, much less meaningfully? But because language, by this understanding, becomes "new every day"[8], the sage is finally not stunned or stultified by the arbitrariness and relativity of language, by its failure, but is refreshed and revivified by its freedom.

The most important clue to understanding this teaching about language is in the image, "Spillover". Graham says it refers to a vessel which tips over when filled to

the brim, then rights itself, like one of those little oriental dolls which are legless and weighted at the bottom, so that they always pop back up when you try to knock them over. These dolls by the way are shaped like gourds and were probably originally made from gourds. The gourd is a symbol of Chaos, "Mr Hun-T'un", described in the famous final passage of the Inner Chapters[9]. Could the original "Spillover" vessel also have been a gourd, and thus associated in Chuang Tzu's mind with Chaos? In Chinese myth[10] Chaos is not a figure of Evil (as in most western mythology), but is instead full of potential, benevolent if somewhat eerie, the ultimate force and source of all creation, of the "myriad things" like the seeds in a gourd or the chopped-up goodies in a won-ton *(hun-t'un)*, or the water in a spillover-vessel which flows out, letting each stream find its own channel, fertilizing the earth, bringing everything into becoming.

Talisman of the Ruler of the South, to assist in refining spiritual energy, and by Taoist Inner Alchemy, help to achieve immortality. The design incorporates a gourd-shaped crucible with *lien* - 'to smelt' or 'to refine' - beneath. *(Tao-tsang)*

from The Gourd vol. 20 no. 2 (Spring 1990)

The vessel could refer to the Sage, who spontaneously "overflows" with words, illumined words. The words find their meanings (channels) spontaneously, according to the language-state of the listener, the reader. And then spontaneously the Sage pops upright and is filled again, and each day overflows again. A chaotic process — but one from which meaning comes into being. (Moreover, one can become practised at this conjuring-act, polished, "smooth".)

The vessel could refer not only to the sage but even more to the words themselves. A word, which in itself is arbitrary and meaningless, spontaneously fills up and overflows with meaning. The meaning is not fixed, but it is not mere "blowing breath", not just a semantic raspberry, blllattt. The vessel fills up and empties again and again — same vessel, but potentially a new meaning each day. So the word contains *more* meaning than it appears to nominate or denominate. There is something more, something extra in the word. There are words beneath (or upon) the words, which flow out spontaneously and find their channels, their expression, their use in a given situation. "Taoist Poetics".

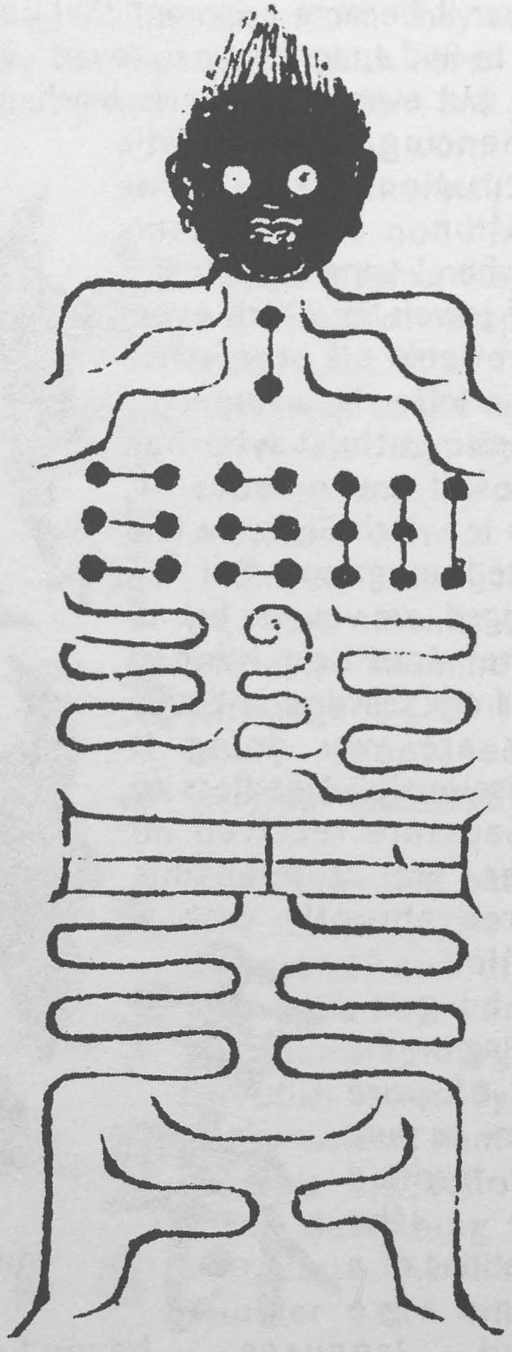
Thus, begining with total linguistic relativism, Chuang Tzu ends with a sort of metalinguistics. Spillover words do not ward and sector, they PLAY. They contain more than they contain — therefore, like the famous cleaver which never needs sharpening because the Taoist butcher can pass it *between* all tendons and joints, the Spillover word "finds its proper channel." The sage does not become trapped in semantics, does not mistake map for territory, but rather "opens things up to the light of Heaven" by flowing with the words, by playing with the words. Once attuned to this flow, the sage need make no special effort to "illumine", for language DOES IT by itself, spontaneously. Language spills over.

Now, recall that Saussure was studying the Latin anagrams, and that he found the key words of the poems spilling over into other words. Syllables of characters' names for example are echoed in words describing those characters. At first the founder of modern

Talisman to vitalize the tongue. It is to be used under the sign of the third branch of the Twelve Earthly Branches, with corresponding symbolic animal Tiger, zodiacal sign Gemini. It represents the Vital Energy *(ch'i)* of the purple clouds of the Centre of Heaven. It is painted in cinnabar-red on a yellow ground. Attributed to Ling-pao. (In an early 12th-century work by Lin Ling-su, *Tao-tsang*)

linguistics considered these anagrams as conscious literary devices. Little by little however it became apparent that such a "reading" would not hold. Saussure began to find anagramatic spillovers everywhere he looked — not only in ALL Latin poetry, but even in prose. He reached the point where he couldn't tell if he was experiencing a linguistic hallucination or a divine revelation. Anagrams everywhere! Language itself a net of jewels in which every gem reflects all others! He wrote a letter to a respected academic Latinist who had composed Latin odes — poems in which Saussure had detected anagrams. Tell me, he begged, are you the heir to a secret tradition handed down from Classical antiquity — or are you doing it unconsciously? Needless to say, Saussure received no answer. He stopped his research abruptly with a sensation of vertigo, trembling on the abyss of pure nihilism, or pure magic, terrified by the implications of a language beyond language, beyond sign/content, *langue/parole*. He stopped, in short, precisely where Chuang Tzu begins.

Talisman used to vitalize the tongue. Such diagrams in heavy calligraphy are an 'improved' version of the blood-stained impressions formerly made on the paper by the cut tongue of the medium. Attributed to Ling-pao. (In an early 12th century work by Lin Ling-su, Tao-tsang)



Far left and right: The One Hundred Talismanic Forms of the character *shou*, 'long life'. center: Talismans to nullify the effects of cursing. Two of a set of five, one for each of the Five Directions.

The talismans combine popular images of the Directional Supreme Rulers with magic diagrams that form their bodies. The Black Supreme Ruler of the North is on the left and the White Supreme Ruler of the West is on the right. (*Tao-tsang*)

* * * * *

"Words are like wind and water."
— Chuang Tzu
(Burton Watson trans., p. 57)

The invisible/conceptual gourd which activates or circulates spillover language can also be compared with the strange attractor in modern chaos theory. The strange attractor is a real but non-material patterning that exists only in the action it informs. Think for example of a swirl of smoke in the air. Why doesn't the smoke simply dissipate evenly, like a mathematical gas? Why are there patterns in it? Strange attractors are "attracting" the particles of smoke into those vegetal undulations, just as planets are attracted into orbits, or cells are attracted into a lizard's ass to replace a cut-off tail. Strange attractors activate "order out of chaos" (in Ilya Prigogine's phrase). Attractors animate "random" matter into coherent shapes — but in reality the attractor only "exists" IN the material process itself. The attractor can serve not only as a model for morphogenesis but even for evolution itself. Prigogine's "creative evolution" depends neither on the blind "random mutations" of the neo-Darwinians, nor on the entelechy or vitalism of the Creationists. With chaos theory, the "Third Mind" has entered the equation, Michel Serres' "parasite". One might coin the term "Taoist dialectics" to describe the action of this *tertium quid*, which bears so uncanny a resemblance to the Strange Attractor, the "catastrophe machine". In the yin-yang disc the lozenge of dark contains a seed of light, and vice versa; moreover the areas are not separated by the straight line of Dualism, but rather by the snaky sinuous curved ambiguous line of dyadic movement. Western dialectics analyzes in order to synthesize, whereas Taoist dialectics begins with synthesis in order to analyze.

If words can be compared to matter — (and why not, given their equally dubious ontological status?!) —and "grammar" can be compared to the Strange Attractors (patterns which are "real" but only "come into existence" in the presence of words and are only "real" IN the words), then we may also compare Chuang Tzu's Spillover Linguistics with the chaos theory of such mages as Prigogine and Ralph Abraham, and launch the science (or pseudoscience) of *chaos linguistics*. This useful fiction will be born under the sign of what Feyerabend called "anarchist (or dada) epistemology" — a kind of anti-Method already dreamed by Chuang Tzu, and central to our project.

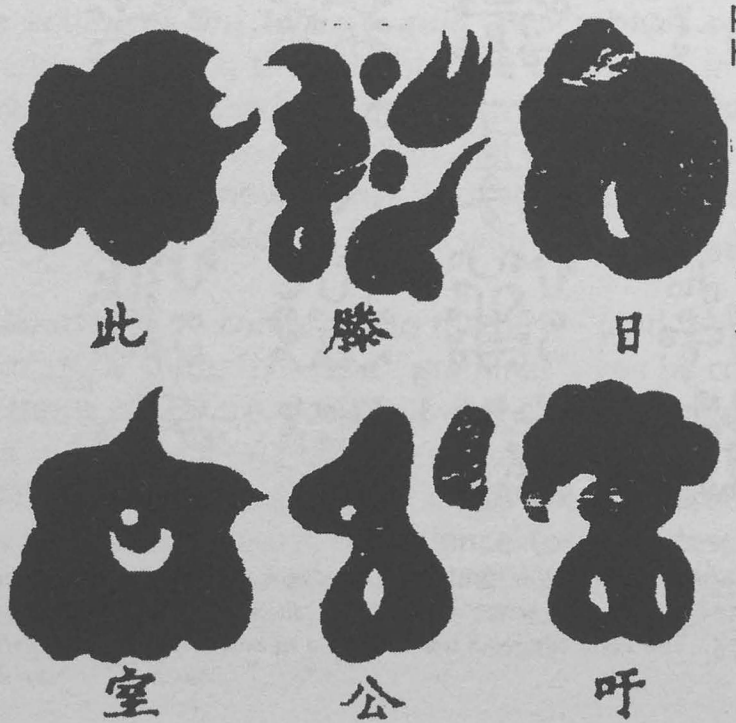
* * * * * * *

In religious Taoism the deity of automatic or "spirit"-writing, Tzu-Ku-Shen, is also the goddess of the latrine[11] — thus calling up the image of magical language as a

Sole surviving example of a secret Taoist script known as the 'Brilliant Jade Character' script. It gives a version of the first 48 (of 64) hexagrams of the I-Ching. The script was used in talismans to refer to cycles of change, based on the trigrams of the I-Ching. The style suggests the influence of embroidery. (In a work of AD 1115, Tao-tsang)

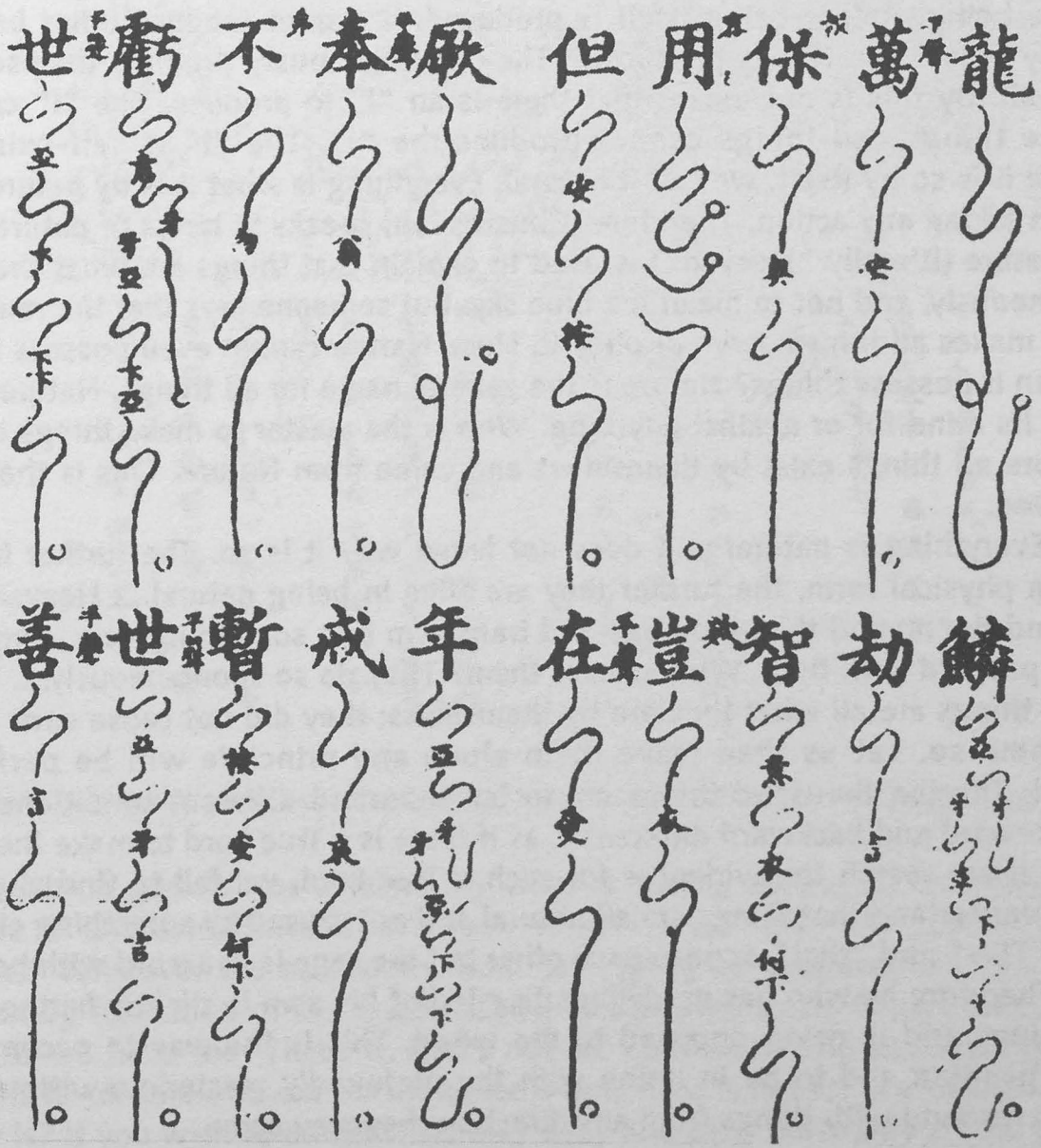
kind of caca-phony or defecatory chaos which somehow manages to convey meaning — (reminiscent of the paradox known to Information Theory in which "noise" can be "richer" in "information" than certain ordered codes). In time Tzu Ku came to preside over a panoply of Immortals who wield the magic inkbrush or "flying phoenix" through human mediums. Usually women, as in western spiritualism, they act as amanuensis to the spooks, and have transmitted everything from garbage to canonical scripture. (Mao Shan Taoism was founded in this way, by two mediums channeling a dead woman sage under the influence of hemp incense.) An 11th century author named Shen Ku describes the process under the evocative title *Dream Torrent Essays* — a sweeping away of daylight consciousness in a wave of hypnogogia.

A great deal of Taoist scripture, both Canonical and heterodox, has been produced in this way. Some of it is "found", like the tantrik Tibetan "treasure"-texts (*terma*), encased in solid rock or living wood, or under water, or in other impossible places. An entire order of Tibetan treasure-finders devotes itself to the lore and discovery of such texts. Some Taoist texts are not composed in human language or writing, but in the "tadpole" or "cloud"-script of the spirits. An immense amount of language has spilled over from the Cinnabar Grottos of the Immortals into our world. While vulgar materialists may content themselves with scoffing at the provenance of this huge indigestible heap of writing, we might prefer simply to marvel at the sheer overwhelming plentitude, superabundance, and generosity of reality itself, which seems to conspire with us in all our maddest japes. As Nietzsche and Bataille have suggested, the myth of scarcity is merely a means of control



Bold Taoist calligraphy symbolizing Earth combined with 'constellation holes', i.e. Heaven. It was reputedly engraved on stone on the outer coffin of Duke T'eng of the Han period, c. 200 BC. [The earliest reference to this inscription is by a writer in the 6th century. Reproduced from the Hui-t'ang che-chi, late 14th century.]

through immiseration, whereas the actual nature of the world is one of absolute fullness, indeed over-fullness, spilling over as constant EXCESS. In language, this over-supply of meaning proves too big to be handled by human consciousness; hence the intervention of the spirits, the "muses" and other extra-conscious sources. Taoist writing serves as a monument to the "generosity of being" or the ever-flowing overflow of the cornucopious Tao. At its most chaotic and ambiguous peak of expression, it "saves" language itself — both from the tyranny of any "lord", and from the abyss of aloneness. Δ



Taoist musical scores, relating to the mystic "Sound of Jade". (Collection of hymns to the Immortals, *Tao-tsang*.)

Appendix A - Kuo Hsiang

Pipes and flutes differ in length and the various notes differ in pitch. Hence the multiplicity and complexity of long and short, low and high, tones. Although tones vary in a thousand ways, the principle of their natural endowment is the same.

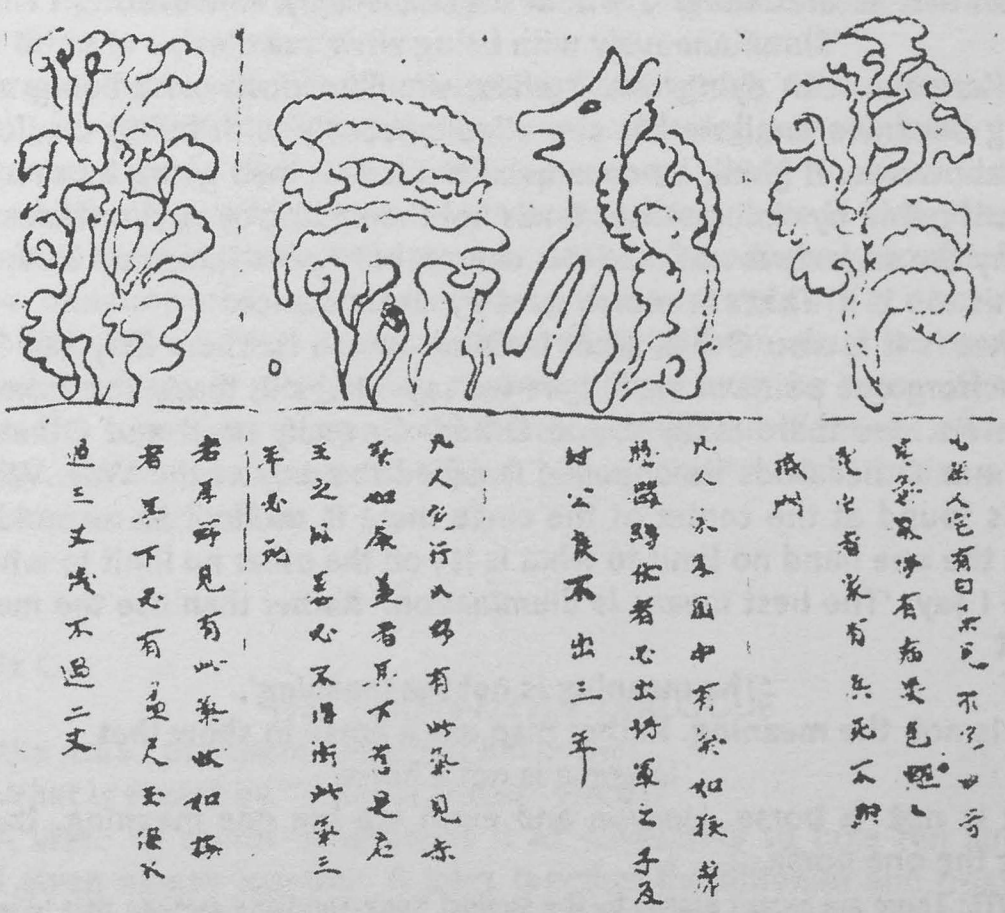
The music of Nature is not an entity existing outside of things. The different apertures, the pipes and flutes and the like, in combination with all living beings, together constitute Nature. Since non-being is non-being, it cannot produce being. Before being itself is produced, it cannot produce other beings. Then by whom are things produced? They spontaneously produce themselves, that is all. By this is not meant that there is an "I" to produce. The "I" cannot produce things and things cannot produce the "I". The "I" is self-existent. Because it is so by itself, we call it natural. Everything is what it is by nature, not through taking any action. Therefore [Chuang Tzu] speaks in terms of nature. The term Nature (literally "Heaven") is used to explain that things are what they are spontaneously, and not to mean the blue sky. But someone says that the music of Nature makes all things serve or obey it. Now, Nature cannot even possess itself. How can it possess things? Nature is the general name for all things. Nature does not set its mind for or against anything. Who is the master to make things obey? Therefore all things exist by themselves and come from Nature. This is the Way of Heaven.

Everything is natural and does not know why it is so. The further things differ in physical form, the further they are alike in being natural.... Heaven and Earth and the myriad things change and transform into something new every day and so proceed with time. What causes them? They do so spontaneously.... What we call things are all what they are by themselves; they did not cause each other to become so. Let us then leave them alone and principle will be perfectly realized. The ten thousand things are in ten thousand different conditions, and move forward and backward differently, as if there is a True Lord to make them do so. But if we search for evidences for such a True Lord, we fail to find any. We should understand that things are all natural and not caused by something else.

"This" and "that" oppose each other but the sage is in accord with both of them. Therefore he who has no deliberate mind of his own is silently harmonized with things and is never opposed to the world. This is the way to occupy the central position and to be in union with the profoundly mysterious ultimate in order to respond with things from any direction they may come.

Appendix B

Saying is not blowing breath, saying says something; the only trouble is that what it says is never fixed. Do we really say something? Or have we never said anything? If you think it different from the twitter of fledgelings, is there proof of the distinction? Or isn't there any proof? By what is the Way hidden, that there



Divination from vapors: the chaotic shapes of mist and smoke awake images in the imagination.

should be a genuine or a false? By what is saying darkened, that sometimes 'That's it' and sometimes 'That's not'? Wherever we walk how can the Way be absent? Whatever the standpoint how can saying be unallowable? The Way is hidden by formation of the lesser, saying is darkened by its foliage and flowers. And so we have the 'That's it, that's not' of Confucians and Mohists, by which what is it for one of them for the other is not, what is not for one of them for the other is? If you wish to affirm what they deny and deny what they affirm, the best

means is Illumination.

No thing is not 'other', no thing is not 'it'. If you treat yourself too as 'other' they do not appear, if you know of yourself you know of them. Hence it is said:

'"Other comes out from "it", "it" likewise goes by "other"',

the opinion that 'it' and 'other' are born simultaneously. However,

'Simultaneously with being alive one dies',

and simultaneous with dying one is alive, simultaneously with being allowable something becomes unallowable and simultaneously with being unallowable it becomes allowable. If going by circumstance that's it then going by circumstance that's not, if going by circumstance that's not then going by circumstance that's it. This is why the sage does not take this course, but opens things up to the light of Heaven; his too is a 'That's it' which goes by circumstance.

What is It is also Other, what is Other is also It. There they say 'That's it, that's not' from one point of view, here we say 'That's it, that's not' from another point of view. Are there really It and Other? Or really no It and Other? Where neither It nor Other finds its opposite is called the axis of the Way. When once the axis is found at the center of the circle there is no limit to responding with either, on the one hand no limit to what is it , on the other no limit to what is not. Therefore I say: 'The best means is Illumination.' Rather than use the meaning to show that

'The meaning is not the meaning',

use what is not the meaning. Rather than use a horse to show that

'a horse is not a horse'

use what is not a horse. Heaven and earth are the one meaning, the myriad things are the one horse.

NOTE: There are extant essays by the Sophist Kung-sun Lung arguing that 'A white horse is not a horse' and 'When no thing is not the meaning the meaning is not the meaning'. Chuang-tzu thinks he was wasting his time; since all disputation starts from arbitrary acts of naming, he had only to pick something else as the meaning of the word, name something else 'horse', and then for him what the rest of us call a horse would not be a horse.

* * * * *

(The same passage from Burton Watson's translation, *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings* [New York, Columbia University Press, 1964], pp. 34-35)

Words are not just wind. Words have something to say. But if what they have to say is not fixed, then do they really say something? Or do they say nothing? People suppose that words are different from the peeps of baby birds,

but is there any difference, or isn't there? What does the Way rely upon, that we have right and wrong? How can the Way go away and not exist? How can words exist and not be acceptable? When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on vain show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and Mo-ists. What one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right. But if we want to right their wrongs and wrong their rights, then the best thing to use is clarity.

Everything has its "that," everything has its "this." From the point of view of "that" you cannot see it, but through understanding you can know it. So I say, "that" comes out of "this" and "this" depends on "that" — which is to say that "this" and "that" give birth to each other. But where there is birth there must be death; where there is death there must be birth. Where there is acceptability there must be unacceptability; where there is unacceptability there must be acceptability. Where there is recognition of right there must be recognition of wrong; where there is recognition of wrong there must be recognition of right. Therefore the sage does not proceed in such a way, but illumines all in the light of Heaven. He too recognizes a "this," but a "this" which is also a "that," a "that" which is also a "this."

Appendix C

THE 'KNOW-LITTLE' DIALOGUE

Know-little asked the Grand Impartial Reconciler

'What is meant by "ward or sector" words?'

'A ward or sector establishes it as customary to take ten surnames, a hundred given names together. It joins together the different and treats them as similar, disperses the similar and treats them as different. Now the fact that when you point out from each other the hundred parts of a horse you do not find the horse, yet there the horse is, tethered in front of you, is because you stand the hundred parts on another level to call them "horse". For the same reason, a hill or mountain accumulates the low to become the high, the Yangtse and the Yellow River join together the small to become the big, and the Great Man joins together the partial to become impartial. This is why for influences from outside he has an appropriator which makes them his own, and he does not cling to one or another; and for outgoings from within he has a regulator which sets them in the true direction, so that others do not resist them. The four seasons have weathers proper to them; Heaven does not favour one rather than another, and so the year

completes its course. The Five Bureaux have tasks proper to them; the prince is not partial to one or another, and so the state is ordered. Peace and war have abilities proper to them; the Way is not partial to one or another, and so does not have the name of one rather than another, and so does not do one thing rather than another, and in doing nothing there is nothing it does not do.

'Times have an end and a start, ages have their alterations and transformations. Fortune and misfortune arrive mingled inextricably, and in

Consultation of a magic diagram. (Early 17th-century illustration from the *Shui-hu ch'üan t'u*)

flouting one thing they suit something else. Each thing pursues the direction proper to it, and on its true course from one viewpoint is deviant from another. Compare them to the wide woodland, where all the hundred timbers have their own measures; or take in a full view of the great mountain, where trees and rocks share the same base. Such are what one means by "ward and sector" words.'

'If so, is it adequate to call that the "Way"?'

'No. Suppose you were counting off the number of things you would not stop at one myriad, yet we specify them as the "myriad things", for we use a high number as a label for what we are counting towards. Similarly, heaven and earth are the greatest of shapes, and Yin and Yang the greatest of energies, and "Way" covers both of them impartially; if we are utilising the greatest of them to label what we continue towards, that is allowable, but once we have it, can we treat it

as comparable with anything else? Then if we use it in chopping to bits and disputing over alternatives, and treat it as analogous with the logician's "dog" or "horse", it will be much less adequate than they are.'

Appendix D

'Saying from a lodging-place works nine times out of ten, weighted saying works seven times out of ten. "Spillover" saying is new every day, smooth it out on the whetstone of Heaven.'

'Saying from a lodging-place works nine times out of ten' - You borrow a standpoint outside in order to sort a matter out. A father does not act as marriage broker for his own son; a father praising his son does not impress as much as someone not the father. The blame for the standpoint is not on me, the blame is on the other man. If my standpoint is the same as his he responds, if it is not he turns the other way. What agrees with his standpoint he approves with a 'That's it' which deems, what disagrees he rejects with a 'That's not' which deems.

'Weighted saying works seven times out of ten' - It is what you say on your own authority. This is a matter of being venerable as a teacher. To be ahead in years, but without the warp and woof and root and tip of what is expected from the venerable in years, this isn't being ahead. To be a man without the resources to be ahead of others is to be without the Way of Man; and a man without the Way of Man is to be called an obsolete man.

'"Spillover" saying is new every day, smooth it out on the whetstone of Heaven' - Use it to go by and let the stream find its own channels, this is the way to last out your years. If you refrain from saying, everything is even; the even is uneven with saying, saying is uneven with the even. Hence the aphorism 'In saying he says nothing'. If in saying you say nothing, all your life you say without ever saying, all your life you refuse to say without ever failing to say.

What from somewhere is allowable from somewhere else is unallowable, what from somewhere is so from somewhere else is not so. Why so? By being so. Why not so? By being not so. Why allowable? By being allowable. Why unallowable? By being unallowable. It is inherent in the thing that somewhere that's so of it, that from somewhere that's allowable of it; of no thing that is not so, of no thing is it unallowable. Without '"Spillover" saying is new every day, smooth it out on the whetstone of Heaven', who could ever keep going for long? The myriad things are all the seed from which they grow:

In unlike shapes they abdicate in turn,
With ends and starts as on a ring.
None grasps where to mark the grades.
Call it the 'Potter's Wheel of Heaven'.

The 'Potter's Wheel of Heaven' is the whetstone of Heaven.

'The Way cannot be treated as Something, or as Nothing either. "Way" as a name is what we borrow to walk it. "Something causes it" and "Nothing does it" are at single corners of the realm of things; what have they to do with the Great Scope? If you use words adequately, however much you say it is all about the Way; if inadequately, however much you say it is all about the realm of things. The ultimate both of the Way and of things neither speech nor silence is adequate to convey.

In what is neither speech nor silence
May discussion find its ultimate.'

Appendix E

Archer Yi was skilled in hitting a minute target but clumsy in stopping others from praising himself. The sage is skilled in what is Heaven's but clumsy in what is man's. To be skilled in what is Heaven's and deft in what is man's, only the perfect man is capable of that. Only the animal is able to be animal, only the animal is able to be Heaven's. The perfect man hates Heaven, hates what is from Heaven in man, and above all the question 'Is it in me from Heaven or from man?'

NOTE: Chuang-tzu generally either exalts Heaven or denies the dichotomy of Heaven and man, and to find him siding with man is so extraordinary that many try to force another meaning out of the passage. But on closer consideration one sees that to get to grips with his last and most obstinate dichotomy in his thought Chuang-tzu would be driven to seek an angle from which Heaven is the wrong one of the pair, to balance the only too familiar angle from which it is the right one. One cannot in the last resort distinguish the work of Heaven and of the man in the skilled spontaneity of the Taoist or the craftsman; if one tries, what is left as Heaven's is the purely animal, and from this point of view it is wrong to prefer Heaven.

Appendix F (B. Watson trans., p. 95)

The emperor of the South Sea was called Shu [Brief], the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu [Sudden], and the emperor of the central region was called Hun-tun [Chaos]. Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the territory of Hun-tun, and Hun-tun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu

discussed how they could repay his kindness. "All men," they said, "have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe [presumably the original text adds, "and shit"]. But Hun-tun alone doesn't have any. Let's try boring him some!"
Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hun-tun died.

NOTES

Sources of illustrations: Laszlo Legeza, *Tao Magic* (London, Thames & Hudson, 1975); *A Handbook of Korea* (Seoul, Korea, Korean Overseas Information Service, 1978); Archives of Xexoxial Endarchy.

[1] Once again I find myself at Dreamtime Village without my library, and so can supply only a few clues from a faulty memory concerning bibliography. J. Needham is the author of *Science and Civilization in China*; this reference is probably from Vol. 5.

[2] Hence the endless and tedious "new" translations of the *Tao Te Ching* which pass for "Taoist studies" in the West, and as the late E. Schaffer lamented, take the place of real research into the enormous and virtually untapped Taoist *Canon*.

[3] The "Inner Chapters" of the Chuang Tzu, the portions supposedly written by Chuang Tzu himself, are considered canonical in Mao Shan Taoism, among other sects.

[4] See Appendix A.

[5] On modern ritual Taoism, see the marvellous works of M. Saso, especially *The Taoist Teachings of Master Chuang*, and *Cosmic Rite.*

[6] See *Words Beneath the Words*, by Jean Starobinski. More on this later.

[7] See Appendix C.

[8] Ezra Pound believed that "Make it new" was a Confucian slogan, but the sentiment is quintessentially Taoist.

[9] See Appendix F.

[10] See N. J. Giradot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: The Theme of Chaos (hun-t'un).*

[11] This is from a book on Chinese spirit-writing called *The Flying Phoenix*; unfortunately I forget the author's name.

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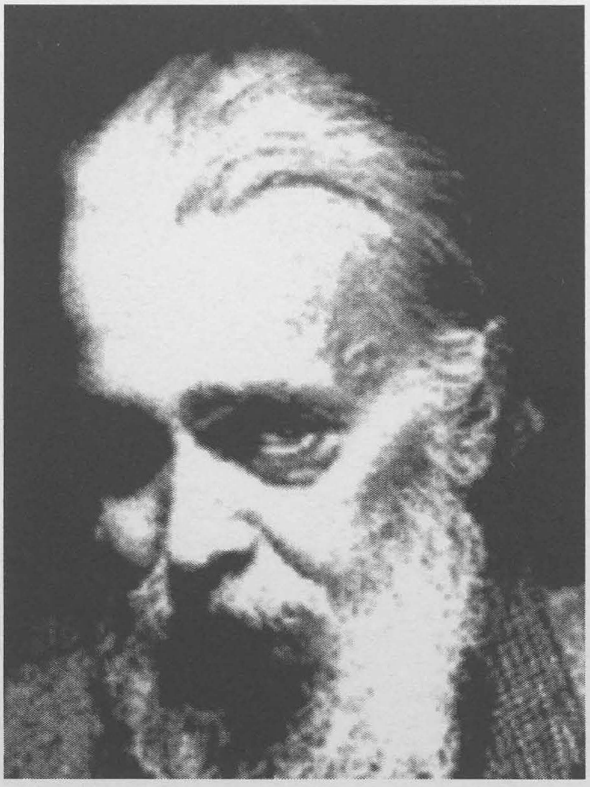

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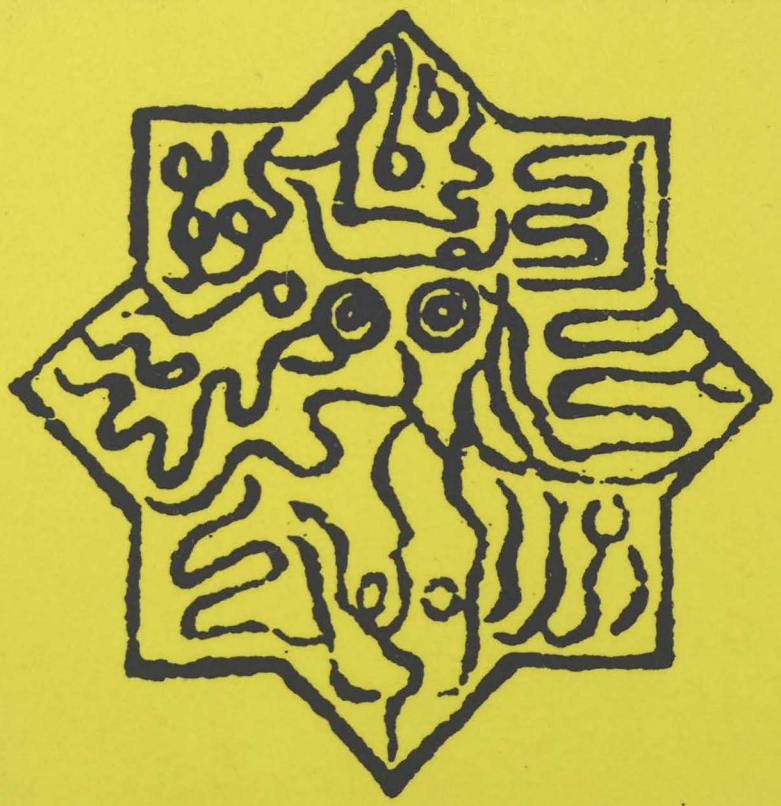
20 February 2016



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